AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT

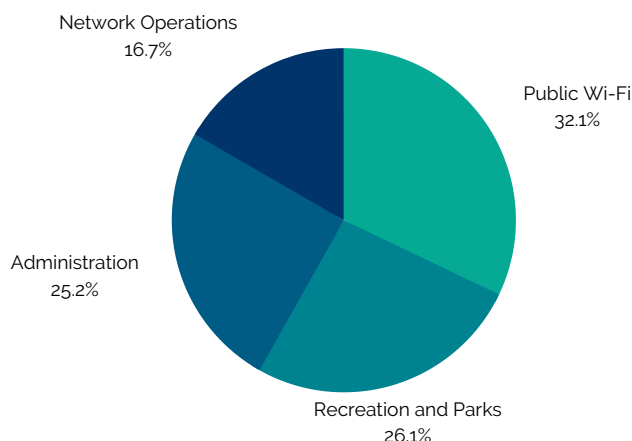## Mayor Scott Announces $35 Million Investment to Kickstart Efforts to Close the Digital Divide

COVID-19 has exacerbated the digital divide in Baltimore City. In 2018, 96,000 households in Baltimore (40.7%) did not have wireline internet services, such as cable, fiber, or digital subscriber line service. Baltimore ranks 29th out of the 33 cities examined for home wireline broadband adoption. Looking at trends, since 2016, Baltimore's home wireline subscription rate has barely moved, going from 58.4% in 2016 to 59.3% in 2018. These gaps are pronounced for low-income homes with children; 80% of homes lacking computers are in the bottom half of the city's income distribution.

When schools and employers were forced to pivot to a virtual environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, those who lacked reliable, high-speed internet access were left disconnected or without easy access to the internet. Residents who lack internet access were and are still unable to fully participate in activities that moved online during the pandemic, including access to City services, remote work opportunities, telehealth resources, and much more. This $6 million investment will provide free public internet service to those who need it most.

This investment will:

- Install at least 100 Public Wi-Fi hotspots in public spaces across 10 neighborhoods in West Baltimore: Mondawmin, Bolton Hill, Reservoir Hill, Upton, Sandtown-Winchester, Easterwood, Penn North, Druid Heights, Madison Park, and Coppin Heights
- Extend City fiber to 23 recreation centers. This will support City employees working at those centers and provide the opportunity to install public wi-fi for residents inside and outside of the buildings.
- Hire staff with expertise in fiber engineering, Wi-Fi deployment, operations, and tech support-- including a Project Manager and Digital Equity Coordinator.

Budget Snapshot:

Network Operations 16.7%
Public Wi-Fi 32.1%
Administration 25.2%
Recreation and Parks 26.1%

SUMMARY:

- The Mayor's Office of Broadband and Digital Equity will receive $6M over two years for Phase I
- This investment will support Public Wi-Fi, internet access at Recreation Centers, community engagement, and network operations.

For more information about the Mayor's Office of Recovery Programs and for updates on ARPA Funding, please visit arp.baltimorecity.gov

MAYOR'S OFFICE OF
RECOVERY
PROGRAMS
BALTIMORE CITY